

HABAKKUK

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. The title of this book, like those of other books of the Minor Prophets, is simply the name of the author. Habakkuk, Heb. *Chabaquq*, is derived from the verb *chabaq*, “to embrace.” Some have connected the name with the Akkadian *hambaququ*, the name of an aromatic garden plant. The name Habakkuk occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament.

2. Authorship. Nothing more is known of Habakkuk than what is revealed in his book. Whether, like Amos (see on Amos 7:14), Habakkuk was called by God from some other occupation, or whether he was specially trained for his calling in the schools of the prophets is not recorded.

Among the famous scroll finds of *Khirbet Qumrân* (see p. 86; see also Vol. I, pp. 31–34) was one scroll dealing with the book of Habakkuk. Upon examination it proved to be an ancient midrash, or commentary, consisting of short passages quoted from Habakkuk followed by the writer’s interpretation of the passages. The writing is well preserved, but unfortunately there are many gaps, or lacunae. The commentary consists of 13 columns of writing and covers only the first two chapters of Habakkuk. The manuscript has been dated c. 100 B.C., about the time of the two Isaiah scrolls (see p. 87). Along with the more complete Isaiah scroll (1QIs, see p. 87) the Habakkuk Commentary has been published in facsimile plates, together with a parallel text in modern Hebrew characters, edited by Millar Burrows (*The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark’s Monastery*, Vol. 1 [New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1950]).

The primary importance of the Habakkuk Commentary to Biblical scholarship is not in the comments themselves, interesting though they may be, but rather in the Bible text itself. This text, copied by some ancient sectarian scribe (probably an Essene), antedates by almost a millennium the oldest manuscripts of the Masoretic text (see Vol. I, pp. 34, 35). Hence it is invaluable for any textual study of the book of Habakkuk. See on chs. 1:4, 17; 2:1, 4, 5, 15, 16.

3. Historical Setting. It appears that this book was written during a time of deep apostasy (PK 386), probably sometime during the latter part of the reign of Manasseh, during the reign of Amon, or during the first part of the reign of Josiah. It seems most likely that the ministry of Habakkuk followed rather closely the ministry of the prophet Nahum. This view is favored by the position of the book in both the Hebrew and the Greek canon. The evils in general that Habakkuk attributes to his people, and of which he complains, also point to this period. The general date 630 B.C. has been assigned to his prophecy for reasons listed on p. 23. The prophet well knew the crisis that Babylon was soon to bring upon his people because of their sins, a crisis that would result finally in the captivity of Judah. Habakkuk forewarned the nation of this crisis and also predicted the divine judgment upon idolatrous and iniquitous Babylon, the enemy of God and His people.

4. Theme. Though Habakkuk regrets Judah’s sins and knows that his people deserve punishment, he is concerned about the outcome of their afflictions. He is concerned also about the destiny of the instrument God uses to inflict this punishment, the Chaldeans, who seem to be blessed with increasing prosperity. God responds to His servant’s questioning heart, and shows Habakkuk that the chastening of the Israelites is for their

ultimate good, while the earthly prosperity of the wicked, represented by Babylon, will pass away because of divine judgment. In the “prayer” of ch. 3 this book is climaxed by a graphic depiction of the doom of the ungodly and the triumphant reward of the righteous.

In this contrast it is God’s purpose to reveal to the prophet how the swelling pride of the Chaldeans, and likewise that of all the wicked, leads to death, while the trustful submission of the righteous to God through faith leads to life. In this emphasis upon holiness and faith Habakkuk takes his place with Isaiah as a gospel prophet.

The book of Habakkuk provides a solution to the problem of why God permits sinners to flourish, comparable to the solution provided by the book of Job to the problem of why God permits saints to suffer (see Vol. III, p. 494). Habakkuk sincerely loved the Lord and earnestly longed for the triumph of righteousness, but he could not understand why God seemingly permitted the apostasy and crime of Judah to go unchecked and unpunished (Hab. 1:1–4; cf. Jer. 12:1). God informs him that He has a plan for checking and punishing Judah for its evil ways, and that the Chaldeans are to be the instrument by which He will accomplish this plan (Hab. 1:5–11; see pp. 31, 32; cf. Isa. 10:5–16).

This explanation gives rise to another problem in Habakkuk’s mind—How can God use a nation more wicked than Judah to punish Judah? How can such a plan be reconciled with divine justice (ch. 1:12–17)?

Rashly, yet in all earnestness and innocence, Habakkuk demands an answer from God (ch. 2:1). Momentarily passing by the rashness of Habakkuk’s demand, God assures the prophet of the certainty of His purpose with respect to Judah (vs. 2, 3), and then points out to Habakkuk his need for humility and faith (v. 4). God proceeds to enumerate the sins of Babylon (ch. 2:5–19). He is fully aware of the treachery and wickedness of Babylon and assures Habakkuk that He, God, is still in control of the affairs of earth. Accordingly, all men, including Habakkuk, would do well to “keep silence” before Him (v. 20), that is, not question the wisdom of His ways.

Realizing that he has overstepped the bounds of propriety by presuming to challenge the divine wisdom and will, Habakkuk humbly repents. In the same breath, however, his earnest, devoted concern about Judah as the chosen instrument of God’s plan on earth (see pp. 26, 27) leads to the plea that divine justice will be seasoned with mercy (ch. 3:1, 2). This prayer is followed by a revelation of divine glory and power which shows God at work for the salvation of His faithful ones and for the overthrow of their foes (vs. 3–16). The book closes with Habakkuk’s affirmation of confidence in the wisdom and eventual success of the divine plan (vs. 17–19).

5. Outline.

- I. The Problem: Divine Forbearance With Judah and Babylon, 1:1–17.
 - A. Habakkuk’s complaint about wickedness in Judah, 1:1–4.
 - B. God’s plan for dealing with Judah, 1:5–11.
 - C. Habakkuk’s remonstrance against God’s plan, 1:12–17.
- II. The Solution: Confidence in the Wisdom and Success of God’s Plan, 2:1–20.
 - A. Habakkuk demands an answer, 2:1.
 - B. God recommends confidence in the wisdom and success of His plan, 2:2–4, 20.
 - C. God enumerates the national sins of Babylon, 2:5–19.
- III. Habakkuk’s Response, 3:1–19.
 - A. Intercession for divine action and mercy, 3:1, 2.
 - B. A vision of judgment and deliverance, 3:3–16.

- C. Habakkuk's affirmation of faith in God, 3:17–19.

CHAPTER 1

1 *Unto Habakkuk, complaining of the iniquity of the land, 5 is shewed the fearful vengeance by the Chaldeans.* 12 *He complaineth that vengeance should be executed by them who are far worse.*

1. Burden. Heb. *mašša'*, an “utterance” (see on Isa. 13:1).

Prophet. Of the other Minor Prophets, only Haggai and Zechariah claim for themselves the title “prophet.”

2. How long. The prophet was greatly distressed on account of his people's sinfulness and the results certain to follow. From the language he employs it seems that Habakkuk had brought his perplexity to God for some time, and yet God did “not hear,” that is, He apparently did nothing to stop the evils in Judah. Habakkuk implies he is more interested in righteousness and justice than God appears to be.

Violence. Heb. *chamas*, wrongs in general, not necessarily involving the infliction of bodily harm upon another, as the English word “violence” suggests.

3. Spoiling. Heb. *shod*, “violence,” or “devastation,” often referring to destruction caused by plundering.

Violence. See on v. 2. The last clause of v. 3 in the LXX reads, “Judgment has gone against me, and the judge receives a reward.”

4. Law. Heb. *torah* (see on Deut. 31:9; Prov. 3:1).

Slacked. Heb. *pug*, “to grow numb.” The prophet attributed the paralyzing of the law's effectiveness among the inhabitants of Judah to God's failure to stop this iniquity. For “slacked” the LXX has “frustrated.” However, the Hebrew reading of the Masoretic text is confirmed by the reading of the Hebrew text quoted in the recently discovered Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls (see p. 1047).

Compass. To surround with evil intent (see Ps. 22:12, 13). As a result the righteous are victimized by the wicked, and “judgment” is wrested and perverted in its relation to them.

Judgment. Or, “justice.”

5. Among the heathen. God proceeds to answer the prophet's complaint. He charges Habakkuk to look among the surrounding nations for the one that God will use to punish His people for their sins. The LXX begins this verse with, “Behold, ye despisers,” which rendering Paul quotes in Acts 13:41.

Wonder marvellously. When God's punishment comes suddenly, it will strike terror into hearts.

In your days. Since Habakkuk had asked “how long” (v. 2) this iniquity would be permitted to continue, the Lord assures him that the divine wrath will come in the time of those then living.

Not believe. An indication of the severity of the coming judgment.

6. Chaldeans. Heb. *Kašdim* (see on Dan. 1:4). The nation of Babylon is now revealed as the agent of divine anger whom God will “raise up” to serve His purpose.

Hasty. Heb. *nimhar*, “impetuous.” This foretells the rapid movement of Babylonian conquests, aptly represented by the figure of the “eagle’s wings” of Daniel’s prophecy (see on Dan. 7:4).

7. Their judgment. So strong and self-confident were the Chaldeans that they acknowledged no power but their own, crediting their grand attainments to their own abilities (see Dan. 4:28–30).

8. The leopards. The swiftness of the leopard in catching his prey is proverbial (see on Dan. 7:6).

Evening wolves. Or, “evening jackals.” These animals are the most fierce at night, when they are prowling around for food (see Jer. 5:6; Zeph. 3:3).

Spread themselves. The context favors the LXX reading, “ride forth”; that is, advance to conquer.

Eagle. Heb. *nesher*, “a vulture,” or “an eagle.” Moses had prophesied that if Israel turned away from God, the people would be punished for their sins by a nation with horses so swift that they are fittingly compared to eagles (Deut. 28:47–50).

9. For violence. “Violence,” the previously mentioned sin of Judah (see on v. 2), will now be the punishment inflicted upon Judah by the Chaldeans.

Sup up. Heb. *megammath*, a word whose meaning is obscure. It occurs only here in the OT, and owing to the uncertainty of its definition, the whole clause has been translated in many different ways in the various versions.

East wind. See on Jer. 4:11; 18:17. The Hebrew word translated “east wind” may also be translated “eastward.”

As the sand. A figure indicating the large number of prisoners and the spoils that would be taken. This quite naturally agrees with the previous figure of the dreaded “east wind” with its columns of wind-blown sand.

10. Scoff. From the heights of their own self-esteem (see on v. 7), the Babylonians would look down on and laugh at foreign kings and princes.

Heap dust. An allusion to the making of a mound or embankment of earth to attack a city (see on 2 Sam. 20:15; see also illustration in Vol. II, facing p. 64). The LXX reads, “cast a mound.”

11. Pass over. Meaning either to pass on, or proceed forward, through the land, or to pass all bounds in pride.

Offend. God is “offended” because the Babylonians attribute their success to their own strength and skill, making their own might their god (see on v. 7). The prophet implies that the nation that is used to punish Judah will itself be punished for its own sins.

12. Art thou not? Habakkuk, speaking for his people, appeals to God for mercy that they do not perish (vs. 12–17). Looking beyond the forbidding prospects of the present, the prophet affirms, in faith, “We shall not die” (see PK 386).

Judgment. Here used in the sense of “punishment.”

Mighty God. Heb. *Šur*, “Rock” (see Deut. 32:31; 2 Sam. 22:3, 47). This title emphasizes the thought that God is a sure and unmoved support of His people. The final clause of the Hebrew text quoted in the Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls (see p. 1047) reads, “O Rock as One chastising him hast Thou ordained him.”

13. Purer eyes. Since the sinless nature of God cannot tolerate “evil” (see Ps. 5:4–6) and cannot countenance “iniquity” (see Ps. 145:17), the prophet is perplexed as to why

God should permit the Chaldeans to “deal treacherously” against His people. They are idolaters, and far worse—at least from Habakkuk’s point of view—than Judah. How, then, can God in justice use them to punish Judah?

Than he. That is, than the “wicked” man.

14. Fishes. The righteous man is often as dumb and helpless under a wicked oppressor as fish are in the nets of fishermen.

Creeping things. See Ps. 104:25.

No ruler. In the Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls this last clause reads, “As a crawling thing over which to rule” (see Gen. 1:26).

15. They. Literally, “he,” that is, the “wicked” man (see on v. 13).

Take up. Here the prophet shows figuratively how the Babylonians conquer nations, the fishing tackle representing the Chaldean armies. However, this same figure could represent the activity of any wicked person.

16. They sacrifice. Literally, “he sacrifices.” A metaphorical way of indicating that the Chaldeans did not acknowledge the true God, but credited their success to their own skillful means (see on Hab. 1:7; cf. Isa. 10:12, 13).

17. They. Literally, “he” (see on vs. 13, 15).

Empty. The prophet asks whether the Chaldeans shall be allowed to go on conquering, to continue to “empty their net,” only to refill it again with the spoils of war. Verse 17 in the Hebrew text quoted in the Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls (see p. 1047) reads, “He shall therefore draw his sword continually to slay nations without showing mercy.”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2-7PK 385

12 PK 386

13 Ed 255; FE 252; GC 310; PK 323; 2T 447; 7T 193

CHAPTER 2

1 *Unto Habakkuk, waiting for an answer, is shewed that he must wait by faith. 5 The judgment upon the Chaldean for unsatiableness, 9 for covetousness, 12 for cruelty, 15 for drunkenness, 18 and for idolatry.*

1. Stand. Habakkuk here clearly demonstrates his faith in God. He represents himself as taking his position, as does a watchman (see Eze. 3:17; 33:7), on some high place in order to get a clear view all around, that he may see and hear what is coming.

Tower. Heb. *maṣor*, “a stronghold,” that is, a place from which to withstand a siege. In the Hebrew text quoted in the Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls (see p. 1047) this word has the suffix meaning “my.”

Watch to see. Habakkuk feels sure that he has confronted God with a valid objection to His plan to use the Chaldeans as His instrument against Judah (ch. 1:6, 13). Accordingly, he calls for an answer. See p. 1048.

When I am reproof. Rather, “concerning my objection,” or “concerning my reproof.”

2. Write. The Lord answers the faith of His servant, and encourages him in his work. Writing would give permanence to the prophet’s messages.

Tables. Heb. *luchoth*, usually stone tablets, sometimes wooden boards. Here these were probably tablets placed in public places where all could see and read them.

May run. The clause reads literally, “so that the reader of it may run,” that is, read it readily, fluently, smoothly.

3. An appointed time. Literally, “the appointed time.” The vision will be fulfilled in due time (see Gal. 4:4).

Shall speak. From the Heb. *puach*, “to breathe,” “to blow.” The clause may be translated, “it panteth [that is, hasteneth] to the end.”

Though it tarry. For the last clause the LXX reads, “Though he should tarry, wait for him; for he will surely come and will not tarry.” According to the reading of the Hebrew, even though the fulfillment of the vision concerning the coming of the Chaldean conquerors should seem to be delayed, in due course it would be fulfilled. According to the reading of the LXX the idea seems to be that even though the enemy should seem to tarry, he would surely come as predicted. The reading of the LXX is alluded to in Heb. 10:37 and the words, along with a phrase from the LXX of Isa. 26:20, are applied to the second advent of our Lord.

The prophecy of Hab. 2:1–4 was a source of great encouragement and comfort to the early Advent believers, known as Millerites. When the Lord did not appear in the spring of 1844 as at first expected, the Millerites were thrown into deep perplexity. It was shortly after the initial disappointment that they saw special significance in the words of the prophet, “The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it.” They rested “upon the language of prophet” (1T 52) and went forth to proclaim the midnight cry, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” (Matt. 25:6; see GC 392).

4. His soul. For the first half of the verse the LXX reads, “If he should draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him,” a reading which appears in Heb. 10:38. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew text quoted in the recently discovered Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls (see p. 1047) is in agreement with the Masoretic text in this instance.

In their primary application these words reprove the prophet for his rashness and lack of faith.

Just. Heb. *ṣaddiq*, “righteous,” “guiltless,” or “just,” used in reference to a person or thing examined and found in good condition. This closing clause sets forth the character of the good man as opposed to that of the evil man described in the first part of the verse.

Faith. Heb. *’amunah*, “constancy,” “reliability,” or “faithfulness,” used here to describe one’s relation to God. Trust in God issues forth from the assurance that God will guide, protect, and bless those who do His will. Habakkuk here grandly affirms that he who lives by a simple faith and trust in the Lord will be saved, but the “soul which is lifted up” through its own willful pride and perverseness in sin will perish.

Where the Masoretic text reads “his” faithfulness, the LXX reads “my” faithfulness, God Himself being the speaker. In the quotation of this text found in Heb. 10:38, comparatively few NT MSS follow the LXX, whereas the majority of the MSS have neither “his” nor “my” modifying “faith.” The readings of both the Masoretic text and the LXX are based on great truths, for a person will “live,” accepted in the sight of God, by his trusting faithfulness to his God, which in turn is based on God’s faithfulness in His dealings with His children. It is likely that this variation in the readings is due to the similarity in form of the Hebrew letters *waw* and *yod* as written during the time of the

translation of the LXX. As written in that period these letters appear practically identical. Used as suffixes to *'amunah*, *waw* would mean “his,” and *yod*, “my.”

While primarily this verse refers to those who, because of their faith in the Lord, will be saved from the Chaldeans and will still find peace, though Judah be destroyed, in a larger sense the verse enunciates a truth that is applicable to all time. More than once Paul employs this OT declaration as the theme of a dissertation on righteousness by faith (see Rom. 1:16, 17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38, 39).

5. *Yea also.* Again the contrast is emphasized between the character of the wicked, as delineated in the first part of v. 4, and the character of the righteous, as mentioned in the concluding part of the same verse.

In ch. 2:5–19 God enumerates the sins of Babylon. He knows that the Babylonians are treacherous and wicked, as Habakkuk charges (ch. 1:13). Nevertheless, God is still in charge of the affairs of earth, and all men—including Habakkuk—do well to “keep silence before him” (ch. 2:20).

Wine. The Hebrew text quoted in the Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls (see p. 1047) has *hon*, “power,” or “wealth,” in place of “wine.”

Proud. Or, “haughty.”

Desire. Heb. *nephesh* (see on 1 Kings 17:21; Ps. 16:10).

Hell. Heb. *she'ol* (see on Prov. 15:11). As death and *she'ol* are represented figuratively as being insatiable (Prov. 27:20; Isa. 5:14), so the Babylonians gathered and heaped unto themselves “all nations” and “all people.”

6. *All these.* The “nations” and “people” (v. 5) conquered by the Babylonians.

Parable. See on Micah 2:4.

Thick clay. Heb. *'abtīt*, a word occurring only here in the OT, and now generally considered to mean “pledges,” that is, garments or other things given as security for debts. In other words, the question is asked, “How long will Babylon go on piling up the debts of right and justice it owes its subjugated peoples before these pledges will have to be redeemed through wrathful retribution upon the inhabitants of Babylon?”

7. *Bite.* Those whom the Babylonians have wronged will rise up and attack them. Historically, it was the Medes and the Persians who plundered the Chaldeans and destroyed their empire.

Booties. That is, “plunder” (see Jer. 50:9, 10).

8. *Spoil thee.* In revenge, “all the remnant” of the nations taken and spoiled by the Babylonians, chiefly the Medes and Persians, will overthrow the Chaldeans (see Isa. 21:2; 33:1). The capture of Babylon will avenge the “blood” the Babylonians cruelly shed.

The land. Some believe that the prophet here refers particularly to the land of Palestine.

9. *Him that coveteth an evil covetousness.* Literally, “a gainer of evil gain” for his house; probably a reference to the Babylonian royal family or dynasty.

Set his nest on high. A figure signifying security.

Evil. Here used to mean calamity (see on Isa. 45:7).

10. Against thy soul. The schemes of the Chaldean king to secure glory “by cutting off many people” ensured his own “shame,” and made certain his own overthrow (see Prov. 8:36).

11. Stone. A striking figure used to indicate the enormity of Babylon’s guilt. Not only men but inanimate things will condemn the Chaldeans’ iniquity (see Luke 19:40).

12. Buildeth. In this third “woe” (see vs. 6, 9) condemnation rests upon the Babylonians because their power was built up through slaughter and “iniquity” (see Dan. 4:27; cf. Micah 3:10). Babylon was enlarged and embellished by the spoils seized from conquered nations. Although this verse primarily applies to Babylon, the truths herein stated are applicable at all times.

13. Lord of hosts. For comment see on Jer. 7:3.

Very fire. All the buildings and fortresses the Babylonians erected through their despotic slave labor would finally only be fuel for the “fire”; and so shall they “weary themselves for very vanity” (see Jer. 51:29, 30, 58).

14. Be filled. Here Habakkuk reiterates a thought previously expressed by Isaiah (Isa. 11:9). The overthrow of Babylon is a type of the destruction of all the wicked at the last day.

15. That putteth thy bottle. Better, “he that joineth thy wrath” (“his wrath,” in the Hebrew text quoted in the Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls; see p. 1047). The RSV of the first half of this verse reads: “Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink of the cup of his wrath.” Like the man who gives drink to his neighbor that he might take advantage of him, so the Chaldeans gave to their neighbors, and it is only fitting that they in turn should be made to drink of the cup of God’s wrath (see Rev. 14:8, 10).

Look. This is a figure illustrating (see Gen. 9:20–23) the abject condition of humiliation to which the conquered nations were reduced under the iniquitous and tyrannical rule of the Babylonians (see Lam. 4:21).

Nakedness. Instead of “nakedness” the Hebrew text quoted in the Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls (see p. 1047) reads “festivals.”

16. Filled. Or, “satiated.” Babylon’s evil treatment of the oppressed will react to its own overthrow. This will make them drink to the full the cup of divine retribution.

Let thy foreskin be uncovered. Literally, “be counted as uncircumcised,” from the Heb. *‘aral*, “to leave uncircumcised.” That is, let Babylon receive the same ignominious treatment it had given others (see on v. 15). Significantly, it is in this verse that the Hebrew text quoted in the Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea scrolls (see p. 1047) has an interesting variation from the Masoretic text of Habakkuk. Instead of the word *‘aral*, the Habakkuk Commentary has *ra’al*, “to reel,” or “to totter” (note that the Hebrew consonants are the same, but transposed). The latter reading, *ra’al*, fits the context far better, the clause then reading: “Drink thou also, and totter.” In other words, the Babylonians were to suffer the same indignities and cruelties they had heaped upon their conquered foes. This reading is supported by the LXX, which has “quake.”

17. Violence of Lebanon. Better, “violence against Lebanon.” That which Babylon did to Lebanon shall come upon her (see Isa. 14:4–8). Some regard “Lebanon” here as a reference to the Temple at Jerusalem, which was constructed of the cedars of Lebanon (see 1 Kings 5; Zech. 11:1, 2). Others see a reference to the cedars cut down in time of invasion.

18. Profiteth. The prophet ironically inquires as to what benefit the Chaldeans derive from their trust in their gods (see Isa. 44:9, 10; Jer. 2:11). Again and again in the OT the folly of putting one's trust in "dumb idols" is stressed (see Ps. 115:4–8; Jer. 10:1–5; etc.).

19. Wood. Wood and stone were the common materials used in the ancient Orient for making images.

With gold and silver. These precious metals were used to beautify the stone or wood (Isa. 40:19; see on Dan. 3:1).

20. The Lord. The Lord is still in His house and seated upon His throne. He is still guiding the destiny of nations (see on Hab. 2:5; Dan. 4:17).

His holy temple. Habakkuk challengingly sets forth the difference between the living, majestic God and the vain, lifeless idols. While the prophet may have had primarily in mind the Temple at Jerusalem as the earthly dwelling place of the true God, in a larger sense he may have thought also of God's "temple" in heaven (see 1 Kings 8:27–30; Ps. 11:4; Micah 1:2, 3). Because of the exalted majesty of God, "all the earth," as the subjects of the King of the universe, are summoned to wait, silently and humbly, before Him (Ps. 46:10; see on Ps. 76:8).

All the earth. That is, all men, including the prophet Habakkuk (see on chs. 1:13; 2:1, 4).

Keep silence. That is, not presume to question the wisdom of God in guiding the destiny of nations, as Habakkuk has done (chs. 1:13; 2:1). The language of this verse is sometimes appropriately applied to reverence in the house of God, though this was not the original intent of the words.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 8T 172
- 1–4GC 392; PK 386
- 2 Ev 129; GC 521; 7T 25
- 2, 3 SR 367
- 3 EW 236; LS 58; PP 170; 1T 52; 5T 10
- 3, 4 PK 388
- 4 ML 55
- 11 8T 55
- 14 8T 47, 60
- 15 MH 341; Te 40, 99, 288, 291
- 20 CM 540; Ed 243; GW 179; MH 438; PK 50, 388; 8T 285

CHAPTER 3

1 *Habakkuk in his prayer trembleth at God's majesty.* 17 *The confidence of his faith.*

1. A prayer. As used here this word is applied to a psalm, a hymn, or a song of devotion (see the superscriptions of Ps. 17; 90; 102).

Shigionoth. Thought by some to be impassioned songs of rapid emotional changes, expressed by rapid changes in rhythm. The structure of Habakkuk's prayer may have reflected this type of poetry. See Vol. III, p. 628.

2. Afraid. The prophet introduces his "prayer" by expressing his awe of the coming divine wrath, and he appeals to God to "remember mercy." He acknowledges the wisdom of God's dealings with men, which he formerly questioned (see on chs. 1:2, 13; 2:1), and makes humble admission of his own error.

Revive. The prophet knows that God, while punishing His own people for their apostasy, will bring sure judgments upon their enemies. He also realizes that in the latter end Israel will be redeemed, and the whole earth “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord” (ch. 2:14). Therefore, he earnestly requests God that this good “work” of restoration be “revived,” or “quickened.” Chastened in spirit, he is no less earnest in longing for the success of God’s plan for Israel (see pp. 26–30) than he was at first (see on ch. 1:2).

Midst. Habakkuk pleads that God’s redemptive purpose be manifest “in the midst of the years,” not at their full expiration. In other words, the prophet longs for the fulfillment of God’s promises of final redemption.

Remember mercy. The prophet well knows that man’s chief hope lies in Heaven’s mercy, not in any human goodness.

3. God came. Verses 3–16 present a sublime picture of the Lord coming in judgment and for the deliverance of His people. The picture is presented in the setting of the deliverance of literal Israel, but is descriptive also of the coming of Christ to usher in the reign of righteousness (see GC 300; for principles of interpretation see Vol. IV, pp. 36–38). In striking figure he describes the effect of this coming upon nature and upon wicked men. Habakkuk uses some examples from God’s past dealings with His people to illustrate these final events of history (see on v. 11).

Teman. A district belonging to one of the tribal divisions the tribal divisions of Edom, or a name for all of Edom (see on Jer. 49:7). Compare Isa. 63:1–4.

Paran. The prophet here alludes to the majestic events connected with the giving of the law at Sinai (see on Deut. 33:2), using them as illustrations of the events in the day of judgment. As God came in splendor to reiterate His law to His people, so shall He appear in glory for the salvation of His people and the punishment of the evildoers. See on Gen. 21:21.

Selah. A word probably used to indicate some kind of change in melody or emphasis (see Vol. III, p. 629).

4. Horns. Or, “rays,” which flashed from His hands.

Hiding of his power. When the Saviour appears, the wounds of Calvary, the tokens of His humiliation, will appear as His highest honor; there will be His glory, there “the hiding of his power” (see GC 674; see on v. 3).

5. Pestilence. Habakkuk now sets forth the effect of the divine appearance. Upon the unrighteous, “pestilence” will fall. In other words, destruction will come upon the wicked.

Burning coals. Heb. *resheph*, “a flame,” here probably used figuratively to mean “a plague.”

6. Mountains. The very symbols of stability (see Gen. 49:26; Deut. 33:15) will be “scattered” at the time of this great event. In contrast to the seemingly “everlasting mountains” and the “perpetual hills,” God’s “ways” are truly eternal and unchangeable (Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6).

7. Cushan. Some consider this to mean Cush, another name for ancient Ethiopia (see on Gen. 10:6). The LXX of this phrase reads “the tents of the Ethiopians.” However, others believe that Cushan is a neighboring tribe of Midian.

Midian. See on Gen. 25:2. “Tents” and “curtains” may figuratively represent the dwellers of Cushan and Midian.

8. *Displeased.* To emphasize the divine power over the whole creation, Habakkuk asks rhetorically whether God was angry at inanimate nature when He exhibited His might.

Thou didst ride. God is figuratively represented as coming with a great host of chariots and horses, as it were, to defend His people and crush their enemies (see Ps. 68:17).

9. *Quite naked.* That is, readied for action. The prophet pictures the Lord as a warrior (see Ex. 15:3), who prepares His bow for use.

The oaths of the tribes. The Hebrew of this passage is obscure, and this has resulted in marked variations of translation in the different versions. The LXX reads, "Surely thou didst bend thy bow at sceptres, saith the Lord." The ASV reads, "Thy bow was made quite bare; the oaths to the tribes were a sure word." The RSV reads, "Thou didst strip the sheath from thy bow, and put the arrows to the string."

10. *Trembled.* Literally, "writhed with pain"; figurative language to indicate an earthquake (see Ex. 19:18; Ps. 114:6, 7; see on Ps. 114:4).

Deep. Heb. *tehom* (see on Gen. 1:2).

Hands. Probably a poetic synonym for waves.

11. *Sun and moon.* Here the prophet uses the history of the sun and moon standing still in the days of Joshua (Joshua 10:11–14; see PP 508) as an illustration of the coming of the Lord (see on Hab. 3:3).

12. *March.* See Judges 5:4.

Thresh the heathen. Or, "tread the nations" (see Isa. 63:1–4; Joel 3:13; Rev. 14:14–16).

13. *Wentest forth.* The purpose of the Lord's coming is to save His people, His "anointed" (see Ps. 20:5, 6; 28:8, 9).

Unto the neck. These words indicate that the "house of the wicked" will be completely destroyed.

14. *Villages.* Heb. *paraz*, a somewhat obscure word that some feel should be translated "warriors."

Whirlwind. See Isa. 41:16; Jer. 13:24.

Me. Probably used by the prophet to identify himself with his people.

15. *Through the sea.* Perhaps an allusion to the Exodus (see Ex. 15:1–19), as a type of the later divine deliverance of God's people (see on Hab. 3:11). At the time of the Exodus, God led His people from Egypt by treading figuratively the surge "of great waters" (see Ps. 77:19, 20).

16. *My belly.* That is, my whole nature.

17. *Fig tree.* In this verse are presented the baleful effects of the Babylonian invasion, the destruction of the "fig" and "olive" trees, so highly prized in Palestine, along with the equally needed "vines," grain, and cattle. Thus it will be again during the final scenes of earth's history, when the earth will be similarly desolated (see DA 122; GC 629).

18. *Rejoice.* Fearful as are the events that this chapter forebodes, it closes on the comforting and soul-satisfying note of joy and hope of salvation "in the Lord." The prophet assures himself that ultimately all will be well because of the faithfulness of his God (see Ps. 13:5, 6; 31:19, 20; Micah 7:7). The problem solved (see p. 1048), the prophet gladly submits his own will to the will of God.

19. Like hinds' feet. Among the rough crags and the treacherous trails of the mountains the feet of the hind were swift and sure (see 2 Sam. 22:34; Ps. 18:32, 33).

Make me to walk. Here Habakkuk identifies himself with his people, as Moses (Ex. 32:30–32), Jeremiah (ch. 14:19–21), and Daniel (ch. 9:3–19) did. Israel's success (see Isa. 58:14) is his own success.

Upon mine high places. God's people will triumph over all opposition, and will dwell securely upon the heights of salvation (see Deut. 32:13; 33:29; Isa. 58:13, 14; Amos 4:13). All the questions of the prophet are answered by faith in God, and Habakkuk rests content that ultimately right and truth will triumph forevermore.

Chief singer. Probably the leader of the Temple music. Very likely Habakkuk's psalm was intended to be used in public worship, perhaps to be accompanied by "stringed instruments."

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 2 PK 388
 - 2–6PK 388
 - 3 Ed 22; MH 412
 - 3, 4 GC 300, 641
 - 4 EW 53; GC 674; 8T 285
 - 6 GC 300; PP 33
 - 8, 10, 11 GC 300
 - 11–13PP 508
 - 13 GC 301; PK 388
 - 17, 18 CT 318; DA 122; GC 629; 6T 157; 7T 275
 - 17–19PK 388
- 1

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Hab 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.